



THE MASQUE
 OF THE ELEMENTS

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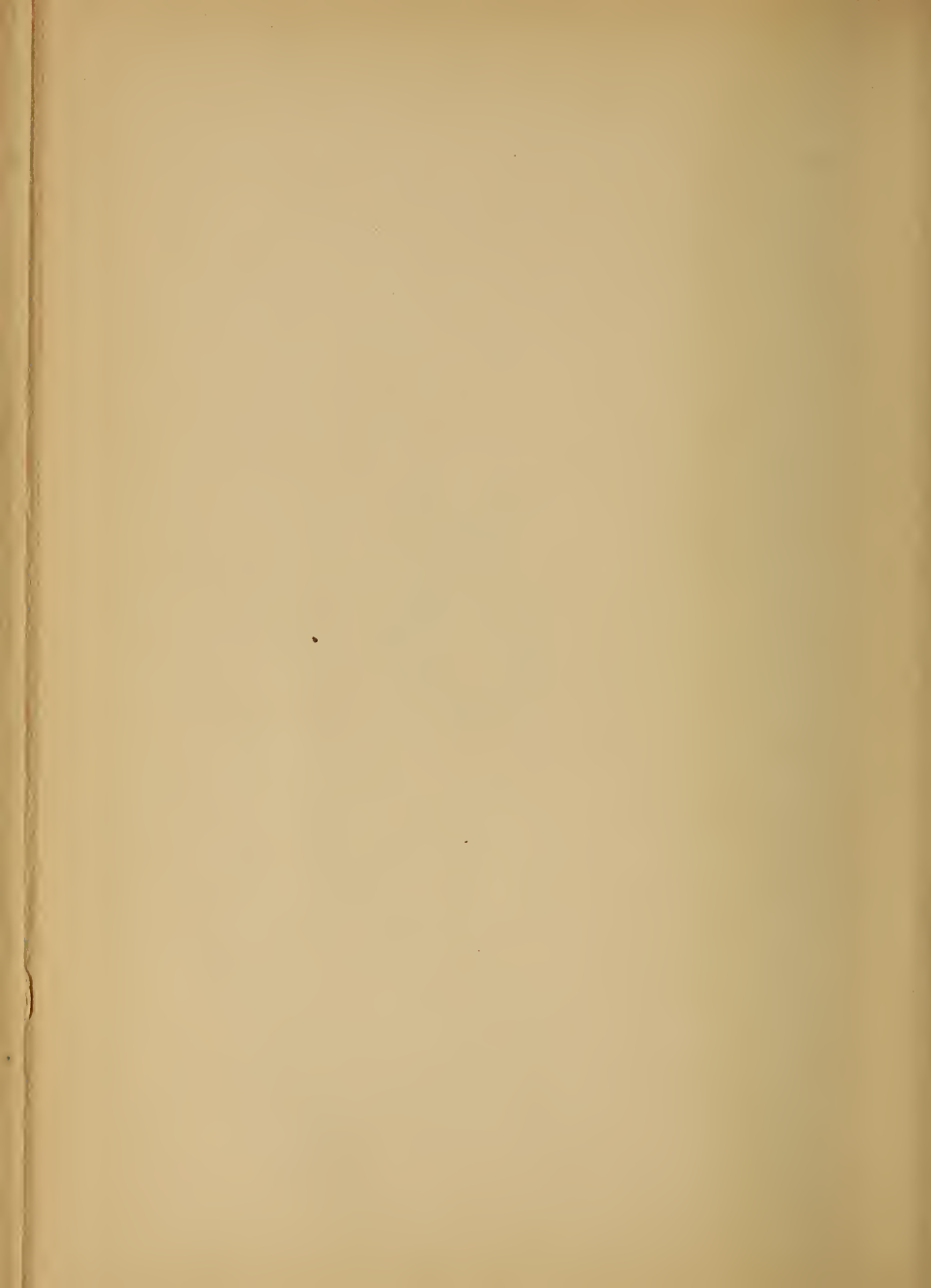
 HERMAN SCHEFFAUER



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*THE MASQUE OF
THE ELEMENTS*



*THE MASQUE OF
THE ELEMENTS*

By HERMAN SCHEFFAUER

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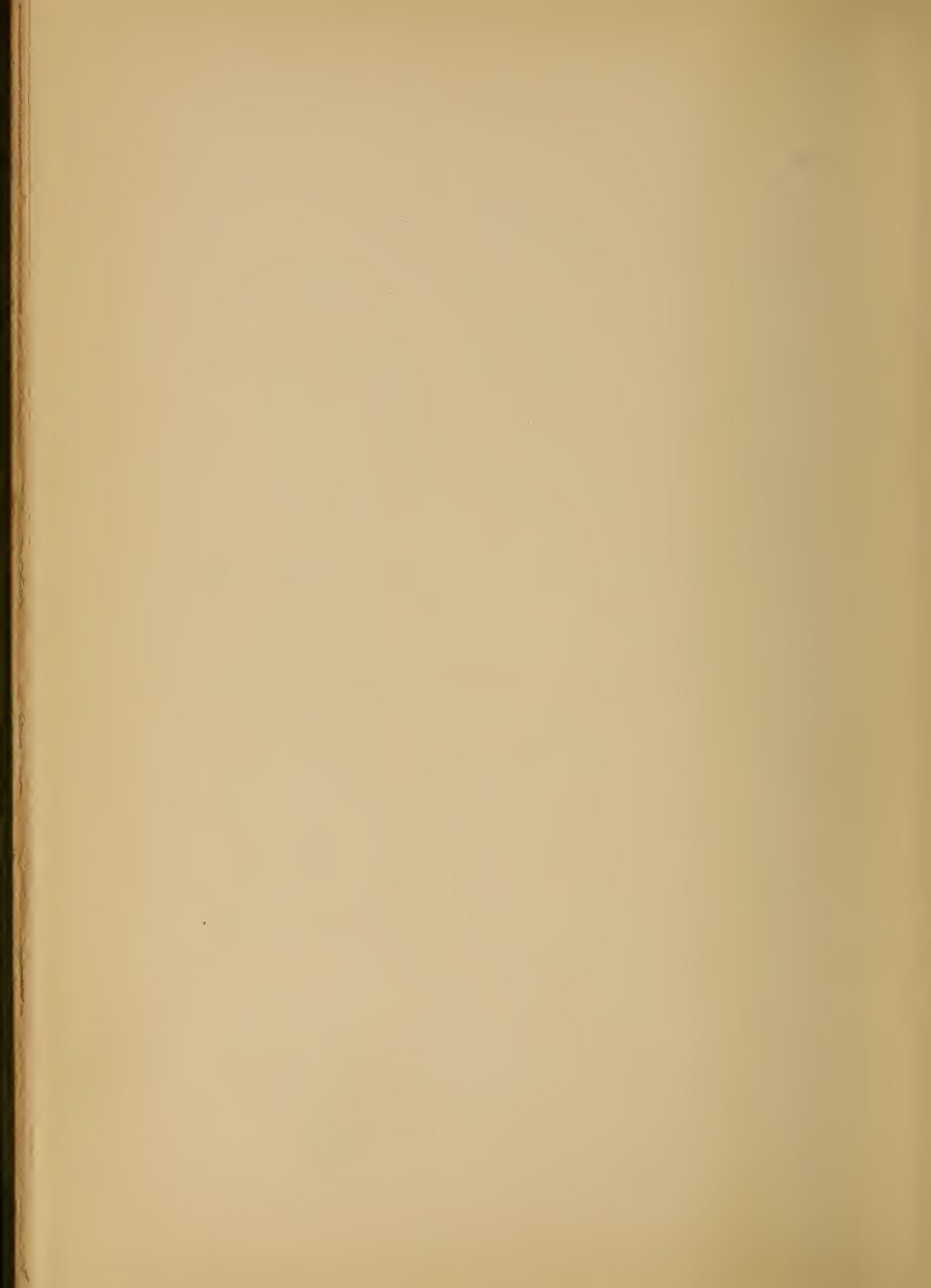
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Oct 20, 1912

TO MY DEAR FRIEND
ALBERT M. BENDER



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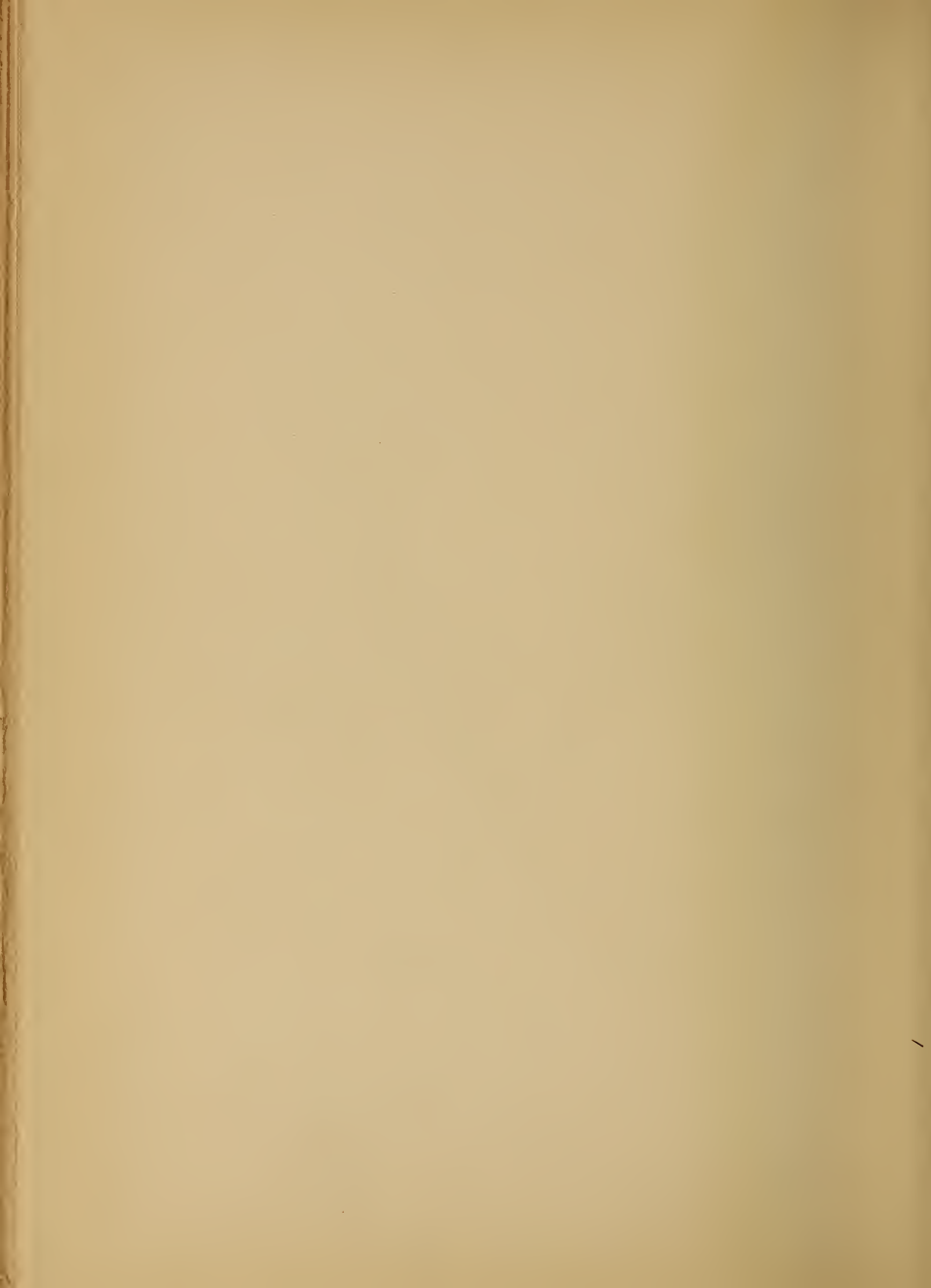
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ARGUMENT

IN this Threnody and Birth-song of the Elements, written in California some five years ago, I have striven to capture and present some of the chief factors and phases of the eternal drama of Life and Death in the Universe. These powers, elements and agents I have endowed with human attributes and human emotions as though it were Man himself who uttered himself through them.

The actors in this cosmic masque or pageant of the planets are the Sun, the Moon and the Earth with her four Elements; for stage there is the limitless background of Time and Space, and the audience may be conceived as being represented by Immanent Nature. Creation and Dissolution are her ministers, twin forces of that divine everlasting Energy which brings to pass the cycles of the Eternal Recurrence.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

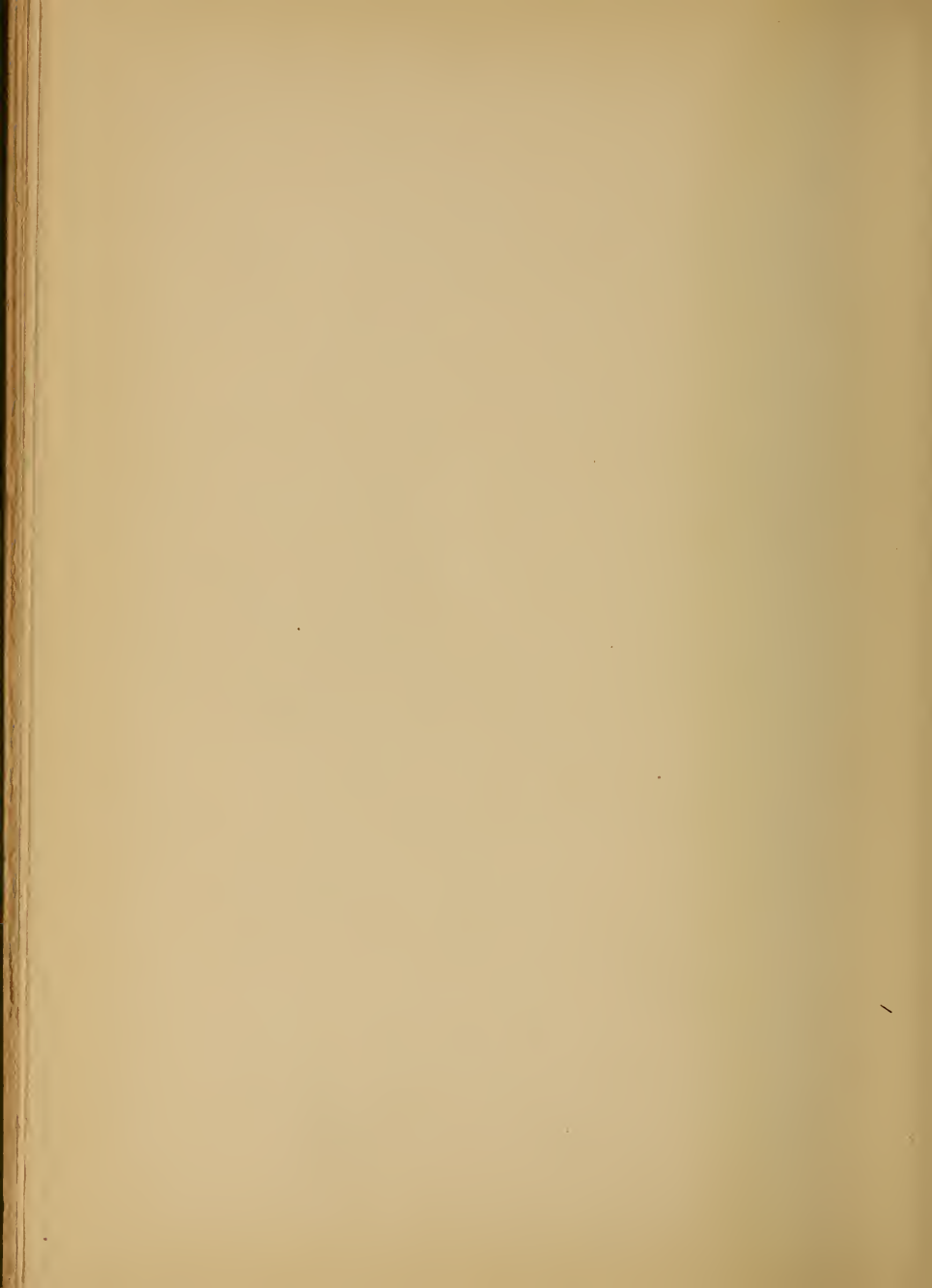
The action takes its course with a certain regard for the laws and revelations of Science, but this compliance is only such as poetry need observe. Despite the inherent and mystic majesty of Matter,—too commonly reviled!—fantasy must have leave, in such a work, to force its way past the barrier of facts or to reshape them to its needs.

Whether the action begin with the impulse of Dissolution or with that of Creation does not in any way affect the essentials of the plan. The alternations of Life and Death, of Cosmic Night and Day, must inevitably follow and destroy each other, like the serpents in the ancient symbol. Yet I thought it desirable to end this work with the larger and salient note of hope and joy that rings out of the Birth that is Re-birth rather than with the Passing which is but a recurrent preparation for that Birth.

HERMAN SCHEFFAUER.

LONDON, 1911.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS
THE PASSING



THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

THE PASSING

*The song of the Spirit of Chaos is heard on high
above the aged Solar Universe*

*The Sun hangs in the black wastes below. His
dazzling beams are shorn away. He glows, but dimly,
like an ember, with a red and smouldering heat.*

*In their concentric rounds lie poised the planets, like
weary-winged cup-bearers, circling about their sleepless
lord.*

*His fire, dull with death, wavers across their dim
faces, even unto dusky Uranus and lowering Neptune in
the cold, outermost rings.*

*In the dark, all-surrounding void new constellations
gleam on the thrones of the heavens. The old are
changed, deposed or dead.*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

*Their figures, unfixed in the abyss, have been shifted
like errant sands of Earth.*

*The spirit of Chaos, from her uncharted tracts,
summons her ministrant powers of Death and Change.
She beholds them blight the worlds. Her presence enfolds
destroyers and destroyed as with a cloak.*

*The dusks and damps of dissolution spread out their
lethal and invisible wings.*

*The voice of the Spirit, like spherul music, flows out
of the darkness.*

*The orbs listen and are filled with a miraculous
consciousness and the soft lassitude of Death.*

SONG OF THE SPIRIT OF CHAOS

THE staring vessels of these worlds no wine

Of Life refills, no seeds of potent change.

So may Death's pale and lingering weeds entwine

These hollow globes that still unhindered range

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

Through Heaven. O famished Time! thy jaws devour
The suns and slumbers of the broken spheres,
Whose knell young stars have heard, whose rounded
hour

Strikes, and is buried in thy bourneless years.
They glow like fevered jewels in the deeps,
Like sullen embers in remorseless Night,
Like flowers with'ring when the Winter creeps
With iron dews their little lives to blight.

Since recordless immensities of Time

I stand whose ne'er-sealed eyes the birth behold
Of worlds dream-born,—their fiery infant clime,
Their teeming life, their epochs gray and cold,
Peace kiss and blot their tarnished light and close
Their leaden urns with gentleness. I shed
The ashes of my silence on their snows,—
Then waft them to my kingdoms of the dead.

*Through the doomed Sun runs a tremor from core
to crust. There is a faltering in his flight.*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

His vassal globes roll on, disturbed and bleak.

*The Lord of Day shakes upon his central seat and
turns up his hectic front in dumb questionings of
despair. He yearns for sleep to seal his kingly eye.*

*The calcined wounds upon him are like many mouths.
They roll forth trembling thunder.*

And now is heard the voice of the Sun in agony:

SONG OF THE SUN

WEARY am I at last! weary am I!

Shall the old eons bring me no repose?

Oh, in long-promised slumbers once to lie .

And feel the films of sleep mine eyelids close!

Oh, once to lave my burning head in Night—

Blest Night! my planets joy thee—every one!

Perish, fatigueless Fire! and thou, O Light!

Vanish. Go leave your emperor, your Sun!

For I am done with blessings scattered wide

Throughout the waste, oppressive Universe,

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

And yonder fading Earth-globe, once my bride,
Becomes to me a burden and a curse.
No more she smiles for me, no more my rays
Urge on her frozen roots to coloured bloom,
No clouds enrobe her nakedness—her days,
Once golden in the dance, are bent on doom.
A loathing throngs the vision, and the face
Of Man is stone and ashen, fallen supine.
How long with Light and Love I warmed his race!
Now iron crowns of Ruin and Death be mine.

*The Earth-orb and her four elements are locked in
the arms of decay.*

*She, like a stricken mother, bereaved of all beloved
things, calls on the Sun, her primal fount of Life.*

*The saddest of all her twilights has fallen and is
moving on to night.*

*Life, be it of man, or beast, or flower, is slowly
quenched, as a torch is quenched in a midnight
lake.*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

*The haunts and habitations of men have vanished;
they are not any more. Yet their ruins are heaped
with snow that shall know no thawing.*

*Every hour of Earth is an eon and her day has yet
many hours.*

*Her elements sing each their song. The parent
Earth sends forth her cry into the void.*

SONG OF THE PLANET EARTH

NOT now thy beams arouse me morn by morn,

O Sun! as when my flesh was warm and young.
Out of our love what children fair were born

To rapture! ere thy last wild song was sung.
I deem thy day is Night and thou the Moon—

So feeble is thy kiss, so cold thy light,—
Lamp of my life, alas!—how soon, how soon—

O speak! comes thy last greeting and good-
night?

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

My breasts are sere as sand, no flowers bloom,
No grass, no forests hide my misery bare ;
The reaches of the tyrannous poles consume
Those gardens of delight we made so fair,
And men lie dark in caves, a sullen race,
Framed of my daughter's flesh but now my bane,
Yet shall I not withdraw my patient face,
Nor tomb them in my hollow caves of pain.
Soon shall I creep no more about thee, orb
Of Heaven, for all my thews grow stark and
dry.
When the years drag me to my end—absorb,
Embrace, enfold, caress me, ere I die !

*A song pours down from the skies, a plangent song
of triumph from the Moon. Yet it is not her voice,
but that of the Moon Wraith. She reigns in mockery
and malice upon her peaks in gulfs of solitude.*

*She sings for her who perished long ago. Her
voice is flung exulting over the ruins.*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

*The Phantasm turns the ashen sphere about the
rusted poles.*

*The mystery of the Moon's invisible hemisphere is
now revealed.*

It too is desolation.

SONG OF THE MOON WRAITH

THEY are dying! all are dying! Night shall force
Us headlong through her shoreless regions blind.
Then must I, an empty lamp, around the corse
Of Earth my dark, unending spirals wind.
I loved the Sun. My heart was molten stone,
Like Earth my face for him with beauty bloomed,
Ere lust and hatred scarred my every zone,
And passion tore my beauty and consumed.
They are dying! I have waited lone and long,—
Long have hung, a warning skull that gleamed
Above their feast of Life and Love;—their song,
Is ended, and the Sun sheds blood. They dreamed.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

Earth that called me cold and pale, grows pale and
cold,—

Now wearily her groaning axle turns
Those alternating glories that she rolled
To mock my ashen tombs and crater-urns!
No more her midnight ghouls nor lovers creep
To curse or bless my light; my shadow crawls
Like some dark moth upon her. I shall sleep
Equal with her in death. The tyrant falls!

*The Element of Earth, waste and inert, hears at
last the cry of the Mother-globe.*

*Her crests and peaks, her vales and plains, lie
white and whelmed with snow.*

*The mountain ranges draw their icy shrouds over
the faces of dead continents.*

*A convulsion seizes on her granite heart, and the
lips of her hills are heard uttering their dirge.*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

SONG OF EARTH THE ELEMENT

SPRUNG molten from the fierce embrace of stars,

Graven by hungry seas and winds and fires—

Lo, my poor frame terrene with all its scars

Lies arid like the dross of blasted pyres!

Opulent fields and fruits, and forest tracts—

O fourfold largess of the seasons! grain,

Once on this bosom waving! cataracts

Poured from my heart!—each precious living
vein

Of gold or gleaming mineral, and flower

And grass and mated creature that I gave

To man unstinted from my royal dower,

Lie cold in this my never-sated grave.

And he, my noblest offspring, whom my breasts

Suckled when ushered from my fertile womb,

Lies low in dark and underearthen nests,

Calling on slow and silent-footed doom. —

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

No more, no more the joyous spring shall thaw
These crystal cere-cloths from my withered heart,—
No more shall Life his golden pageant draw,
Nor ever a seed shall spring nor a flower start.

*The all-embracing and tender Air is without motion,
lifeless and exhaust.*

*His eight lordly sons lie undone in eight far regions
of the globe.*

*Thinner and thinner grows the element as it is
drained away to dissolution.*

*Meteors from the outer vast pierce, unconsumed, the
canopy of the dying Air. The helpless Earth is smitten
with showers of fire-javelins.*

*Sighs suffuse the atmosphere and putrescence rises
with its legions of leaden ghosts.*

*What is this sound, so low, so faint, so thin? It
seems like the first whisper of the youngest of all the
Angels, or the last sigh of the oldest of all Men.*

It is the Song of the dying Air.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

SONG OF AIR

DEAD! dark! flown! my primal happiness;
The stark ice ribs my high and hollow cave.
The vortex of the World spins raptureless,
And languorously crawls the oily wave.
From sun-shot peaks of dawn no more I leap
Like a launching condor past control,—
O speak, Son of the West! if this be Sleep—
Or Death that is our destiny and goal?
Thick torpor clouds the climes; eternal snow
Falling, falling, falling, throngs my realm.
Shall nevermore my breath o'er Ocean blow?
Nor wrestle with his seas that roar and
whelm?
No balsam to the woods can I restore,
Nor render pure my breath for man to drain;
I faint within his nostrils that implore
My draught to rouse his drooping heart
again.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

My Earth that I enfolded like a bloom,
Lies but a withered creature,—sterile, cold,—
Hither, fly hither! O winds who share my doom,
Oh, wail your dying sire whose days are told.

*A prone and expiring giant lifts up his bulk once
more and would not die.*

*It is Ocean, usurper of Earth's deepest vales,
besieger of islands, batterer of continents.*

*His great green front and land-fettered limbs glimmer
up to his mistress Moon. His breast heaves unto her
as of old with an awful and passionate longing.*

*But a film has veiled his eyes, and now stagnation
builds up her muddy pillars in his heart. There Death
reigns amidst havoc.*

*His leviathans and huge worms and wrecks of ships
rot on every shore and in his dunnest deeps amidst
pearls and sea-born blooms.*

*The innumerable myrmidons of his empire, fretted
masses, chained by weeds, oppress the old Equator.*

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*The coasts he laved and swept are marred with
deadly froth. They are now but ruins of the vast
poison-chalice of the sea, all fringed with bloody
spume.*

*This is his final anguish and these his final groans.
It is the last song of the sorrowing Sea!*

*Hoarsely reverberates his threnody; he piles up
higher and higher his tremendous tomb of sound, be-
neath which he shall compose himself in tideless calms
of sleep.*

SONG OF THE SEA

Oh, I am old and hoar! so old that none
Of all my drops holds memory of birth:
My mists no longer rise to robe the Sun,
No longer lend great rivers to the Earth.
Low in my deeps my broken creatures die,—
They die! and their corruption loads my floors;
Countless and cold, my lordly monsters lie
On league-long sands of continental shores.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

Where bide you, O white stallions of the waves?

And you torrential surges,—where the crest
You flung on leaping mountains that you drave

Across your father's fields from East to West?
Shine forth, O Moon! unveil thee, pallid queen!

Heal me, as when my passion clomb to
thine;

Shed down thy lucent drench, thy light serene,

Oh, lift me back to Life and Love—oh,
shine!

My salt hath lost its virtue in men's blood

And o'er their hearts the marish vapour crawls;
Now Death o'erwhelms me with his colder flood,
And, prey to Time, my royal glory falls.

*Dæmon of Fire, fairest of all elements, fairest, purest,
divinest, Spirit of Life and Power, that dwells never
with Death!*

*His feet take hold on Earth, but his crest rears its
unhampered glory in the highest airs.*

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*Fleeing from Nature's frozen breast, he trends to
lowest crypts, swift to some final refuge, moving in
leaping sheets and sinuous trails.*

*The mouths of all volcanoes, once his throne, are
choked with snow. In subterranean corridors cold creeps
upon the central vaults of flame.*

SONG OF FIRE

BACK to the womb I creep, back to the womb!

Let snows and stagnant seas my province
blight,

Deep down in matrix grotts shall I consume

My mother's flesh, my spirit and the night.

I shall beat about her heart a few brief years,—

I, who once rolled fiery gold through all her
veins,

And soared from mountain-throats o'er hemispheres,

And throbbed in huts and palaces and fañes.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

What power in me abode! what loveliness!

The three vast elements proclaimed me king,
Straight from the Sun I sank with gifts to bless

The world with living tongue and burning wing.
I came, and Man sat caverned with the brute;

I nursed him and he rose into a god;
I leave him and he withers with the fruit

Of ages on the ground his splendour trod.
Farewell, you airs and skies from whence I fell,
Fond Earth, farewell, and all thy beauty past—
And thou, old pulseless Ocean foe, farewell!—
All dead! I too shall die, though I be last.

*Utter silence and utter lifelessness engulf the Globe;
the frozen and adamant bars of oblivion fall.*

*As the soft sibilant tones of the Fire-dæmon flutter
away, slowly the spheres recede and vanish in the
clasp of Night.*

*Once more is heard, sweet and clear, the voice of the
Spirit of Chaos.*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

*Her music of mercy sinks softly down like star-dust,
or as of old dew on terrestrial flowers.*

*Through the infinite Universe, through Eternity, she
sings her everlasting song.*

*She lulls her endless flocks of worlds asleep ; she seals
them up in the dark cycles of mutation—or makes them
to bloom in the Night.*

*For they awaken once more when rings aloud the
impulsive alternating song of the Spirit of Life, her joyful
sister, clad with inevitable day.*

*Now the solar orbs are overcast with swift eclipse as
with a mantle.*

They are swept into illimitable abysses.

*Above, below and all about gleam vast cohorts and
constellations of living stars, pouring crystalline melody
from thrones of Light.*

*Ghosts of worlds drift by, and suns wrapped in
extinction.*

*They too are floating tombs, in them too, Life, Love
and Thought lie sepulchred like seeds.*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

Sepultured, until from the mighty marriage of orb with orb in planetary impact shall the great rose of Existence re-unfold its leaves in the light and warmth of suns new-born.

So follow and follow the unending successions of the Seasons of Eternity.

SONG OF THE SPIRIT OF CHAOS

DARKNESS, unconquered Darkness, spread thy tent,
Silence, build up thy co-eternal wall.

Death, who art silent and dark, this firmament
Is thine, these withered worlds—Oh, take them
all!

Pearls dead and lustreless, float back to Death,—

You from the sun-dust born and starry spray,
Life set you free and warmed you with his breath

A day, and Night hath fallen on that day.
Float back to Death, pearls dead and lustreless,
So he may sow you on the stormy streams

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

That wander unto awful wars and press

Onward their throneless orbs that know no beams,—
Blind sepulchres that hold within their stones

Ashes that sang and dust that shone with thought.
Though suns on suns emergent dash your zones

With lustre-floods,—no wonder shall be wrought,
Till out of ruins of transmuting strife

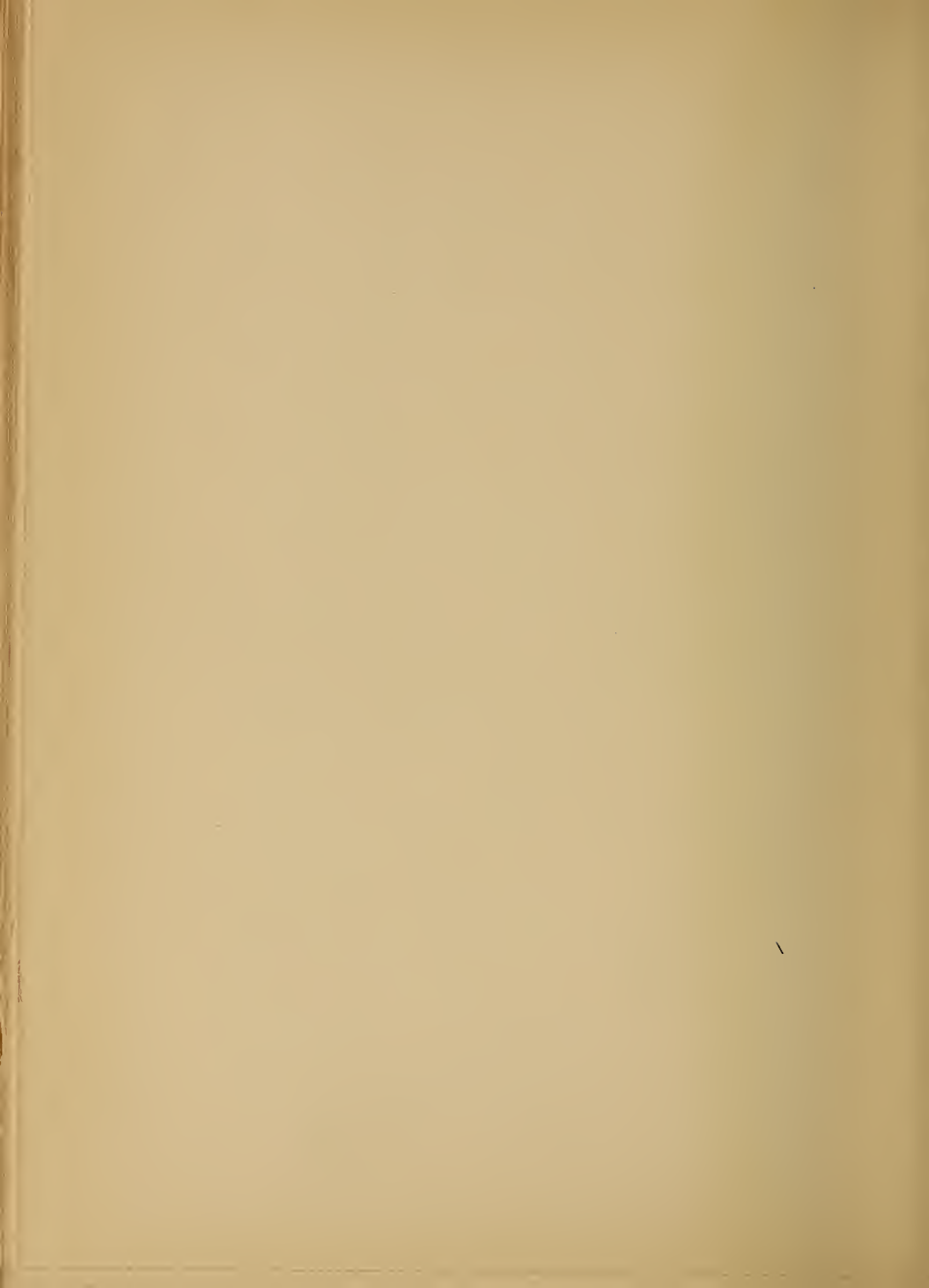
With sister globes that weld the eternal chain,
You win alternate Life and Death and Life

Again . . . and again . . . and again . . .

*The voice of the Spirit passes away into Immensity.
Darkness and Silence in Immanence.*

*The unheard rhythmical suspiration of the Universe.
Peace.*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS
RE-BIRTH



THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

RE-BIRTH

*The vacant room of stars is flooded with a presence.
The tides of Life pulsate with the prophecy of Birth.
Now it is the Song of the Spirit of Creation that is
heard on high above the perished Solar Universe.*

*The dead worlds are hidden in the lap of Night,
sightless, forlorn wanderers. They move in darkness,
unseeing and unseen, though smitten by the rays of
living stars.*

*Upon their cold breasts of stone the dust of ruined
worlds lies as a garment. Windless it lies as it falls or
rises out of Chaos that encompasses all.*

*The Spirit of Creation moves grandly through the
deeps. In her hands she bears Fire and Light, on
her lips her all-conquering command. She flings dead*

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worlds among the dead, as a sower his seed or a slinger his stones.

A spark is lit in the vast obscure. A glory, a rose of fire, blooms in the pit of darkness. It is now a glowing mist with far-spread vans, a phœnix wrought of flame.

The cloud gathers about it its flowing veils and swarming foam of Fire. It winds them around its white effulgent heart. The sundered flakes of crimson twist and turn, they shrink, yet do not flee.

Out of the blazing mists a new-born Sun shapes forth his awful splendour. His worlds divest themselves of robes and wings, shining in beauty white and pure.

The dead are born again and the stars rejoice in light.

From the molten orbs there comes a murmur, a fresh music to mingle with the Sun's.

The words of the Spirit of Creation swell in a harmonious storm, they mould the worlds as with hands, they sweep the plumbless spaces as with a besom of winds.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

SONG OF THE SPIRIT OF CREATION

LET orb be wedded unto orb!—let light
Engender in the wombs of fiery clouds
In flashing spirals scarring the dead Night,
With tongues of argent fire and crimson shrouds.
You bear the seed of Worlds; from you shall
spring

A Universe through roaring cycles spun
Round him whose bulk enormous crowns him
king

And master of all vassal orbs, the Sun!
You golden worlds or white, you gelid Moons,
Each in your mountant orbit king or queen,
In midnights plunged or soaring in your noons,
Accoutred in glory male, or virgin sheen,
Awake! awake! the dark unbars her gate!

Burst forth like gems from Death's titanic tomb!
The joyous zenith and mute nadir wait,
Vessels of Life reborn, to yield you room.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

Rocks and their garnered ores shall form your
flesh,

And you shall pant in flowing seas of Air;
You shall have boon of Waters, salt and fresh,
And gift of godlike Fire to make you fair.

*Afloat in splendour, panoplied in light—the arch-pon-
tiffical Sun!*

*He shakes his threshing, intolerable mane of flames,
his face bans darkness and makes a burning void in his
domains. He pours his lustihood and power upon the
joyous spheres. His rays transmute all things. Through
the dancing infant host his Magnificat is upborne on the
breath of his desire.*

*Triumphant rolls his pæan. He casts from him his
tempests of solar melody, vibrant and far-winged.*

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SONG OF THE SUN

EMBATTLED life in living light immerst,

I shed the glory of my fatherhood!

These shafts shall quell the surgent dark and
burst

The walls of night that pent my circling brood.

Rolled twyfold in each shining cirque and arch,

My jewelled court of splendour ring on ring,

Salutes me down my firmamental march,

Hailing me sire, all-quickener, lord and king!

I fling eternal largesses of light

And warmth, and wave my torch within the
deep,—

Dance! purple planet-children, in my sight

Around Creation's golden core! Go sweep

Within this blaze of winnowed flames, you sons

And daughters wing'd with veils of rain and fire,

Hold high your mirrored Moons!—you myrmidons

Of meteors robed with flame—you comets dire,

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

Far-wandering lights, go seek my brother spheres
And yonder orbs, now basking span on span ;
And bear me tidings if their ripened years
Have made them joyous with the face of Man.

*Emblazoned with crests of lustre like the Sun, the
Earth-orb wanders singing through her rounds.*

*She flings her arms and tresses of Fire to the stars,
a mænad in the planetary dance.*

*The cold voids of hungry space drink up her ardours.
She glows redly ; the Fires retreat into her heart and
her form is clothed with lava as with the Sea. Now
is she muffled in her new-born clouds and the rains
struggle through her fervent Airs.*

She floats, a watery globe, in the face of the Sun.

*She urges up her writhing continents that smoke high
unto Heaven.*

*And they grow green as her Seas are green. The
Winds are in her hair, the Sun dowers her with riches
as a bride, the Waters lace her robes with silver cords.*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

The tributary seasons begin their march, laden with store of beauty.

The stately sphere lifts up her chant, measured unto her dance in majestic tides of rhythm:

SONG OF THE PLANET EARTH

AGAIN before thee winding, O Sun, at length,—

At length, thou call'st me from the wintry deep!

With cornucopian Fire thou giv'st me strength,

Caresses and golden hours and grace of sleep.

My filial song I weave with theirs who roll

Afar or close, past thy celestial face,

My sister lamps that o'er the Zodiac's scroll

From fane to fane in adoration pace.

The rapt Equator's crimson cincture holds

Me close; my emerald ocean-robcs flow free,

And purple soar my mountains, folds on folds,

With vale and plain. My bondmaid Moon to me

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

Reveals her marbled snow in cusp and shale—

Whilst in my flinty womb the valiant strife
Of Fire proclaims me thine and bans the pale
Usurper Death beyond my fields of Life.

In Winds that wrap my path, lo, I shall sing

To thee a choral eternal, Lord of Days,
And Life with myriad hearts in me shall sing
Thy glory to scan forever, and chant thy praise.

*The wrinkled Moon, charred by the fires of her
brief youth, sits serene above the rose-blown round of
Earth.*

*Like an aged beldam she crouches in the heavens,
ashes upon her head, weaving her ancient silver magic,
spelling enchantment upon the nether Sea.*

*She is a sybil in whom the wisdom of the worlds
is garnered up. Her eyelids are heavy with the
poppy.*

*She smiles and spins in sunlight and in shadow,
weaving robes of slumber for her mistress. She holds*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

her shining disk on high as a mirror for her queen.

Her song is such as the watchers sing that sit by the couches of birth and death.

SONG OF THE MOON

THE silvern mistress of the golden Sun,
The milk-white sister to the wine-red Earth,
My lord still smiles upon me, nor will shun
My face for hers of younger, fairer birth.
Though oft her fruitful beauty glides between
And robs me of his countenance, I will
Ne'er hate her, but yield up my borrowed sheen
To make her hallowed nights more hallowed still.
Burn then, my pale and vestal flame, make fair
The nuptials of the amorous Earth with night!
My sickle reaps the lurking stars in air,
My argent shield hangs lucent on the height.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

Yet he that chafes and wounds the Earthen shores,
And flees though she embrace—the yearning Sea,—
Is shackled by my smiling and implores
My chaster, colder kiss and mounts to me.
With pearls of white enchantment I bestrew
The happy realms where lovers hunt their bliss;
My ray is pale as frost and soft as dew;
My path is woven in snow through the abyss.

*The ambient fluid of the Winds is born, Air is born,
invisible Element, felt yet unfeeling. The fissure of the
lightning leaves it unwounded, the destroying tempest
undestroyed.*

*It is the bath of the girdled Earth, perfumed with
balms and essences. It is the crystal shell whereunder
Earth ripens like a fruit.*

*The light Winds sing as they roll in their courses,
weaving the bland and passionate Airs into prophetic chords.*

*The Element stirs into harmony and musters into one
universal voice :*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

SONG OF AIR

Again I clasp the pure, the passive globe,
Her delving valleys and each granite range,—
The Sun and Heaven's bent azure form my robe:
With me the Oceans rove, the cloudlands change.
Once more the quarters of the world I part,
And part those quarters 'twixt my princely sons
And pennoned fowl! Let lark and eagle dart!
And warbling flocks fill my dominions!
Son of the South! bring perfume, nard and spice,
Lade all thine amorous burdens on my gales:—
Thou that the Pole-star wooest, mailed in ice,
Let swarm thy snow-white bees upon these
vales!
O West Wind, from each rude and swooping
wing
Shake forth thy salty tempests, from the plains
Transport me healing! Golden Orient, sing,
And fan me with thy murmurous painted vanes.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

O whirlwinds, rash and rude ! O headlong wrath
Of your unbridled and cyclonic staves !
Shall man yet tread you like some earthly path ?
Shall I, your king, wear shackles like his slaves ?

*Lord of all waters, Ocean, wrapped in emerald robes,
clasps and usurps the world.*

*The flagrant arrows of the Sun shower on his glancing
mail. The estray Winds are wanton with his locks. His
mutinous waves whisper each to each, and leap and sink.*

*Desire irresistible roves within his heaving deeps.
Life wields a goad in every drop.*

*He decks his floods for the face of the Moon, and
enlaces them with chains of shackled pearls and bands
of foam.*

*He sends his salty breath aloft and wreathes the Sun
with clouds. But his mists return again, falling as tears
upon his face.*

*Inert in the profounds the blind bathybus lies. Fecundity
flings her seeds and spores into the glazed abysses, and*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

they teem. There is a heaving in the broken, sunless bottoms ; the continents and islands are upcast, rugged and black, shaking the roaring Seas from their flanks.

The labour and song of the Sea begin ; the billows repeat it to the lips of the infant land.

SONG OF THE SEA

FLOW, Waters ! spread afar my zones of green,

So I with salt baptismal waves may haunt

And bathe the new-sprung continents terrene,

Hearing my freshets and young rivers chaunt.

O white-armed children of mine elder waves,

Behold what golden lands lie in your sight !

Bellow ! you molten thunders, in my caves,

You whales, gush forth your fountains of delight !

Dance, merfolk and mad dolphins, dance the Seas,—

My watery palace-halls are deep and wide,

And Earth hath quaffed mine emerald wine whose lees

Shall make her shores teem fertile. O'er my tide,

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

The ermine of my surges and the flags
And mews lie dense, and pearls sleep in my
breast.

The coral burns upon my darkest crags,
And the slow, mountant atoll knows no rest.
My leman fair, the charmèd Moon, bends low
To draw me with her webs of mute desire,
And lo! beyond her magic empires glow
Pale fires of sunrise and red sunset fire!

SONG OF EARTH THE ELEMENT

*Earth, the Element, mute, impassive, primal, lies
shaped to valley, plain and peak. Enwombed in her,
the ancient vast fertility lives on.*

*Her veins are charged with promise and birth, exhaust-
less quickenings of her eager flesh. She drinks from rocky
bowls where lakes lie spread, from twining rivers and
living streams.*

She pours her virgin vigour through fields no plow

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

has riven. In darkness granite-ribbed, she prisons her mineral boards.

She lies as a garment upon the Mother-sphere; her feet trespass on Ocean.

Her heart is fretted with Fire, her flanks by the Seas, her brows by Sun and Wind.

In patience and sweet sufferance she lies, substance, nurse and genetrix of Life.

Her Song is heard, a mutter of music, low yet coalescent in slow estrangement from her lips.

I WAKE again!—O dauntless peaks that stand,
Watch-towers to all the Heavens—O vales that
lie,—

See where I rise or stretch, the lusty land
Checks Seas and winnows Winds and frets the sky.
Deep in my vaulted heart and womb of fire,
And in the domes and chambers of my breasts,
The seeds of Life glow teeming—O Sun-king, sire!
Arch-quickener of Existence, gild these crests;—

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

Scatter thy warmth till harvest clothe these plains,
And I shall broider me in bridal dreams,
Yea, light my feast with blazonry, my veins
Leap like my crystal and tellurian streams.
In me bright blooms and golden fruitage blown
Shall mark where errant, immortal summers creep,
And man that is flesh of me, in every zone
Build jewelled towns where quick and dead shall
sleep.
O fixed and faithful through the seasons round,
The throne of Earth, her sceptre and her loom,
Are mine, with mute, maternal glory crowned,
In me all Life shall flower, all Death re-bloom!

*Child of the Sun, unmastered and insurgent pulse
of Life; breath of the empyrean, seraph winged with
ardours and with loveliness!*

*Comes Fire, pontiff celestial, King of Elements, errant
angel, that basks and rejoices in his spaces.*

He comes and takes from darkness and cold their

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

undivided victories. Out of the famished sands he leaps, out of the crater's maw.

The genius of flame winds on, touching the peaks with consecration. His red and golden nakedness is crested with his sable clouds of hair.

Upward and onward he aspires. His crimson vans are spread against the heavens, his torches flutter, making glorious the funerals of the day. His feet are a scourge across the soil; his arms are lifted to the stars.

Co-eval with them he burns and sings with a thousand tongues.

SONG OF FIRE

A FETTERLESS, bright spirit, wing'd and pure,
Soul from all souls of Suns in essence bred,
Lo! Fire am I,—without me shall endure
No Life, nor plant nor creature lift its head.
In burning beards of comets red I float;
I dance with lambent torches on the stars;

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

I wash with sulphurous flame the roaring throat
Of peaks, and blaze beneath the thunder's cars.
Master of Earth am I;—on her my will
I stamp, and with fierce searing kisses press
My passion on her naked flesh and thrill
Her hidden veins with rapture. My caress
Is lustral. In her lovers' hearts I creep
And tip with fateful coals the prophet's tongue;
God-like from lips of poets I sing and leap,—
I the eternal fair, the eternal young!
And none shall conquer me save they who call
My strength to sovereign toil in craft or strife;
With me shall tribes of men hold festival,—
Cities and realms shall find me Death or Life.

Repossessed of their ancient heritage, the four conqueror Elements sit on their dowered spheres.

Wind, Ember, Current, conscious Earth, the eternal weavers and toilers, labour in felicity.

Chaos and Night and Death are disenthroned. The

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

system burns along its orbits through the dark. The benisons of the stars and suns are cast upon these youngest worlds.

Buoyant and blithe the planets wheel.

Their year-long arcs and each season's ordained processional are portioned unto them: their vassal moons also, and the speed of their turning and their measure of night and day.

The ruddy jocund Earth presses close to the Sun, timorous of the outer void, baring her bosom to his kiss.

Has not the inevitable and recurrent Spring of Existence come unto her once again? The iron shackles of Silence—are they not broken?—the granite of the Night, is it not crumbled low?—the ice of Death, is it not molten?

She blooms in her resurrection; her voice is lifted in the universal litany to Life. She rolls in her golden garniture of beams, circling with the singing sister-spheres. Her rondure floats against the distant cohorts of the constellations.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

*The ancient Spirit of Chaos swings her pitchy cressets,
and sinks down the starless deep on her tall catafalque
of Death.*

*Rejoice, O orb vested in beauty! Put forth thy
wings, thy coronals of Love, wrap thee with fluctuant
Winds and exulting Seas!*

*Shall thy offspring feel dismay, knowing what light
shall burst from dark, what life leap from Death, what
flowers blow from dust?*

*So the anointed and belted spheres, re-risen from their
bath of silence and their sleep of time, move on com-
panioned with eternal hope.*

*The fingers of the Sun stroke forth a glorious strain;
the worlds are shawns and cymbals for his minstrelsy.*

*The Spirit of Creation pours forth her victorious
baptismal harmonies.*

*Triumphantly her music daunts the firmament and
echoes against the dusks of the Unapproachable.*

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

✓ SONG OF THE SPIRIT OF CREATION

ONCE more the soft, terraqueous chaunt I hear
In choral, and the nuptial planet-dance
I mark. With puissant sceptre o'er each sphere,
Life thrones in music and in wonder's trance.
Hail! vessels solar and terrestrial, hail!
Whose prows shall cross the dim, celestial bars
With helm siderial and cloudy sail,
Bannered with youth and lanterned with the stars.
What fates for ballast? by what voices grim
And laughters urged, your astral course I mark,—
Warped to what ports remote your hulks shall
swim
Or anchor silent in what stagnant dark?
Mine arms have raised you from the cosmic deep;
Now Fire hath sprent his jewelled drops and
sown
Marvellous seeds whence beauty's plants shall creep
Season to season weaving, zone to zone.

THE MASQUE OF THE ELEMENTS

Now sacerdotal Love shall shape and dye

His forms within the house of joy and tears,

And Birth shall bless and Death shall sanctify

Earth's passion and her pageant through the years.

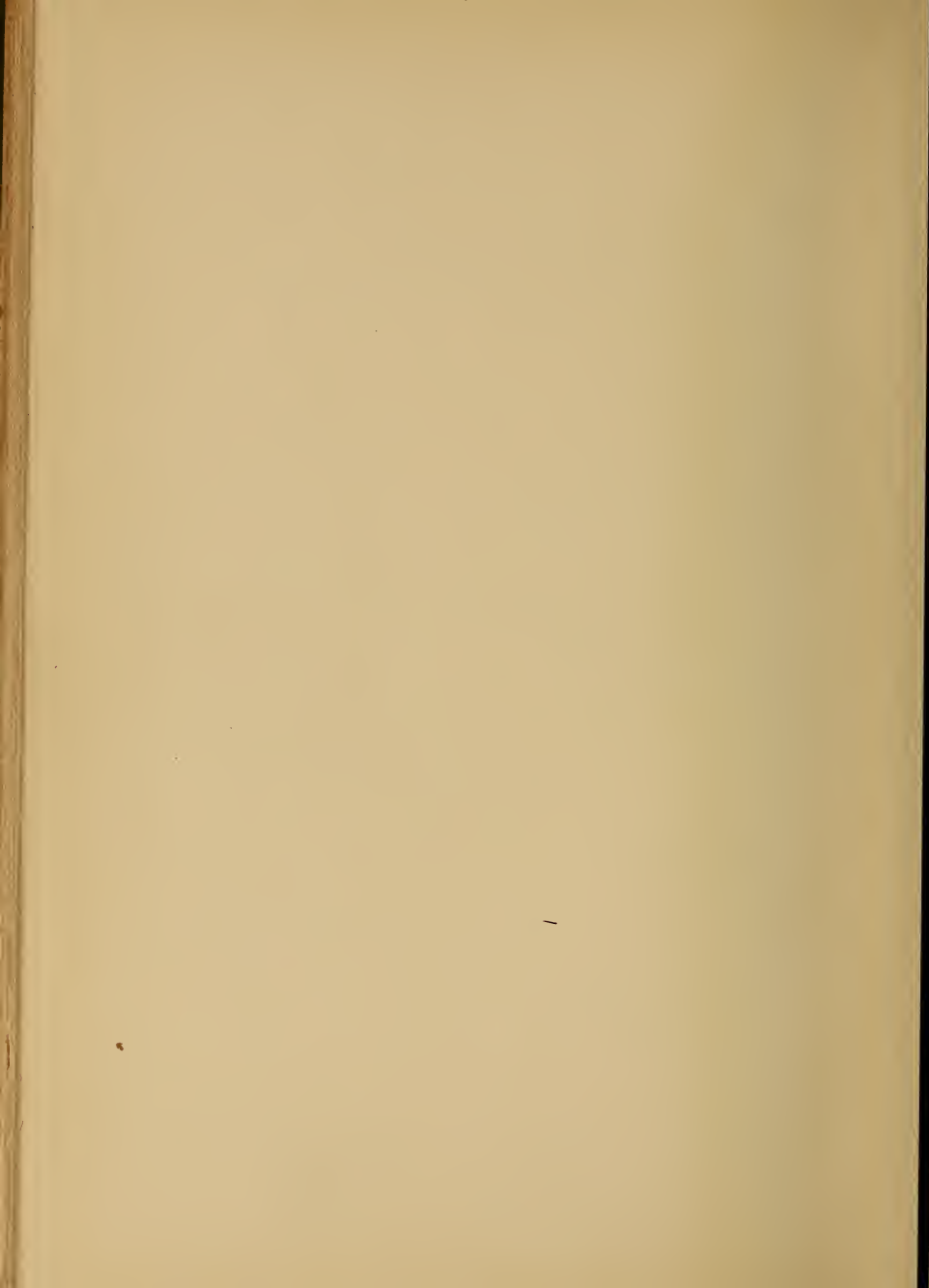
*Down the everlasting, unchangeable cope the hymnal
of Life is reft away.*

But its music is showered over Earth.

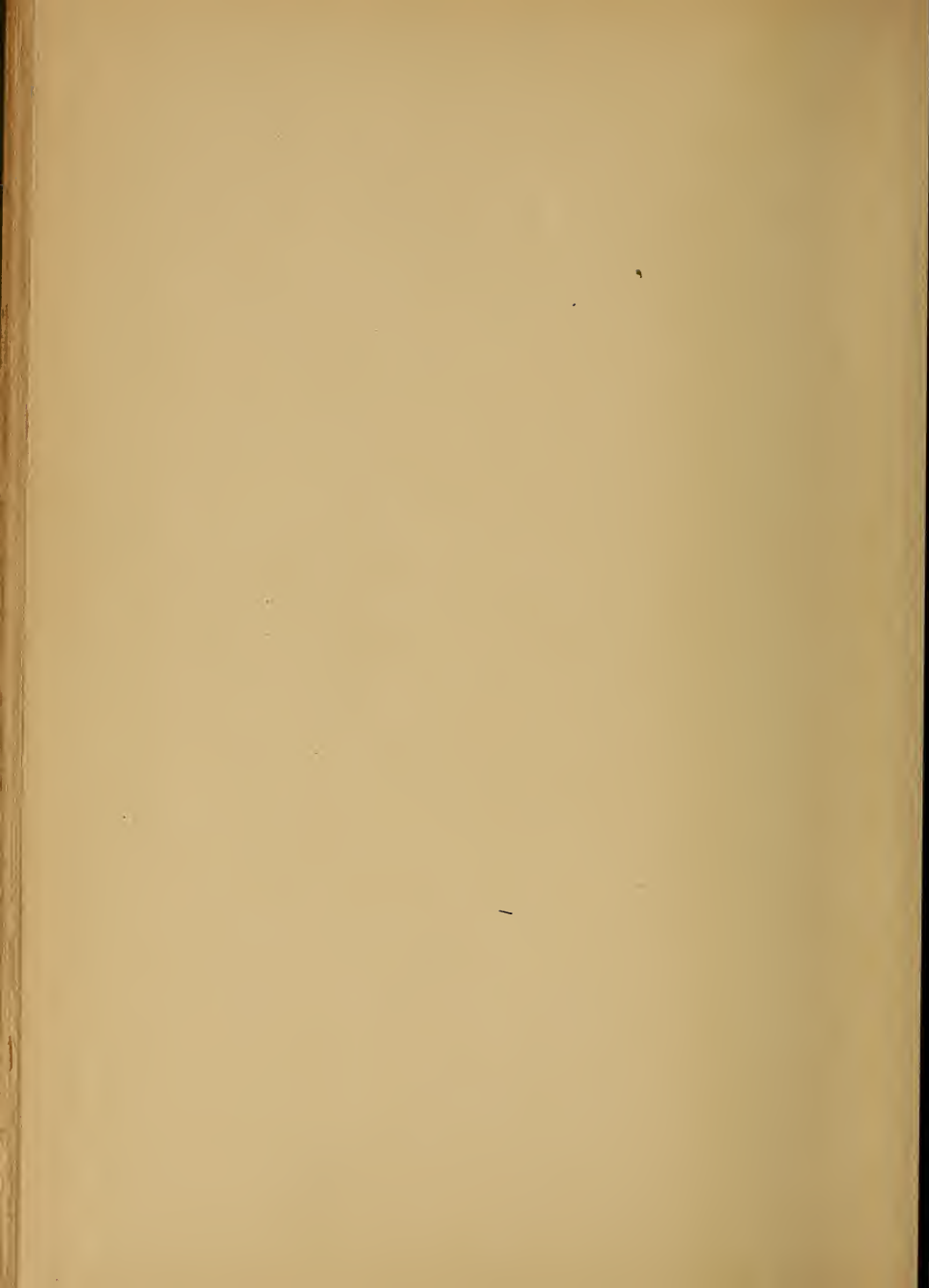
*It is prisoned in the sea-shells; the flowers garner
it in their chalices.*

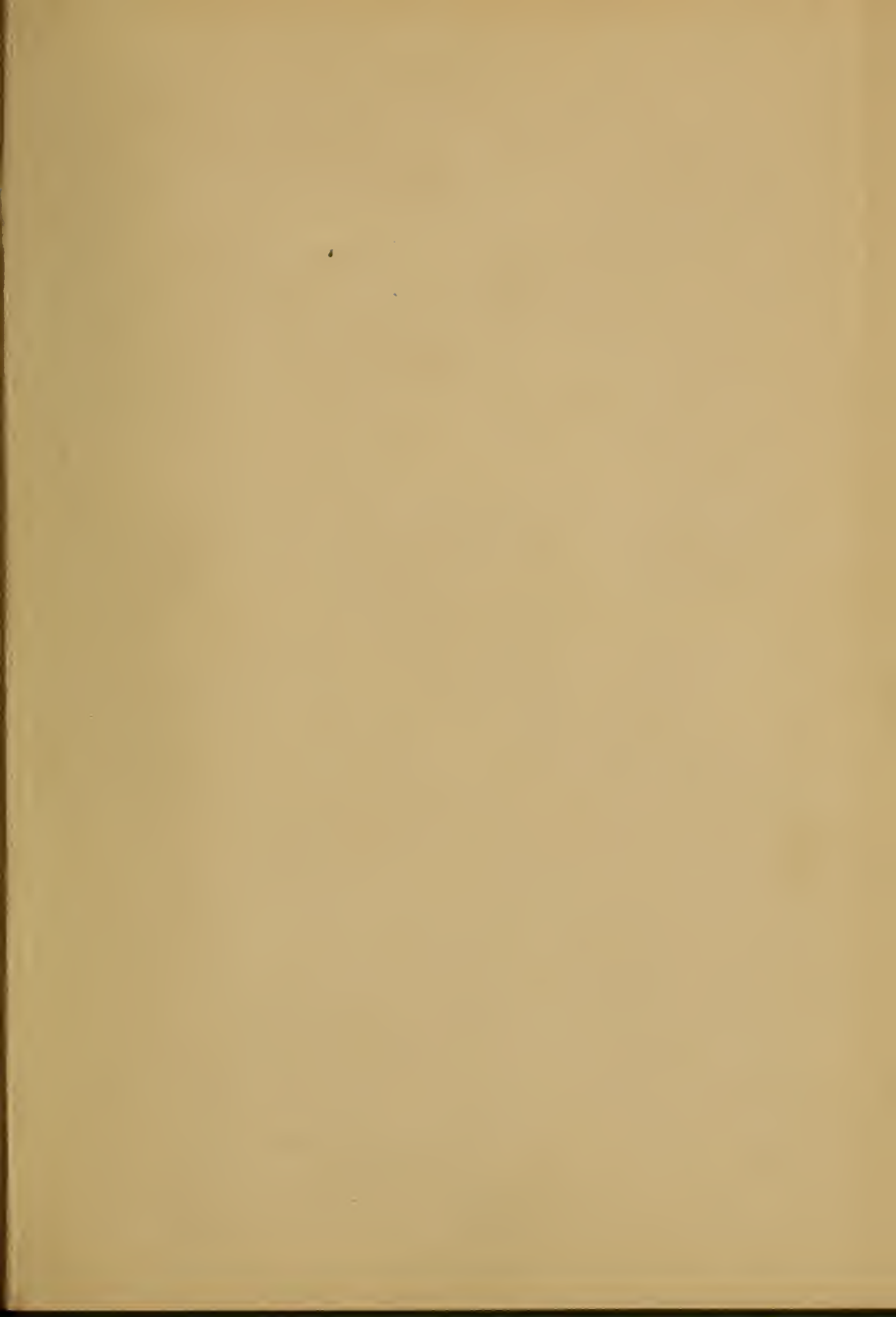
It stirs in the heart of Man.

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